

BLUES NEED MORE PUNCH IN ATTACK

WYCOMBE Wanderers' weakness up front, which has been much in evidence in their five matches this season, cost them two Rothmans Isthmian League points at Loakes Park on Tuesday night. They were held to a goalless draw by Oxford City, who had previously won only one of their five games.

Although four victories by the Blues have tended to overshadow their deficiency in the forwards, it is noticeable that only three players have found the target this season and of those, Tony Horseman has five, three of which have come from the penalty spot. Against Oxford, Wycombe relied far too much on their veteran goal machine who is in his 15th season with the club. Whereas last term, 'Bodger' was being replaced with 15 or 20 minutes left, he now has to go through the full 90 minutes. Not only that, he misses the support given to him by Searle and Perrin and has to work that much harder.

In an effort to take some of the weight off him, Wycombe brought on substitute Dave Bullock upfront on Tuesday but to make the transition from defender to forward is no easy task and it seems Wanderers badly need a new striker.

At the moment, their forwards are all working hard but the extra flair provided by the two that have left them is lacking. If a new player doesn't appear they will still be a side to be reckoned with, but their attack will probably be limited

In the two other departments, defence and midfield, Wycombe look well equipped. John Maskell is as sound as ever while both full backs are in prime form and John Delaney and Keith Mead are also playing well. Thanks to Terry Reardon and Mick Holifield, the middle of the field is producing the

Despite their poor results this term, Oxford looked too good a side to be languishing near the foot of the table. Their outstanding player on this occasion was Woodley. City's answer to Tony Horseman (he has made over 700 appearances for the club), he scarcely put a foot wrong. I can't remember a

Horseman. He crossed to the far post and spreadeagled the defence leaving Holifield with a tap-in at the far post. But Mick miscued his shot for a goalkick.

There were no shortage of home attacks at this stage. Fine passing threatened Oxford time and again but as soon as the ball approached the visitors' penalty area, the moves broke down. Wanderers tried everything to break through with Paul Birdseye and Eaton often surging through from defence. Free kicks too had more variety — but Oxford withstood all that was thrown at them with cool defensive work.

A long range header from Holifield from a Kennedy corner gave Harris an anxious moment but although City played well in defence, their attacking ploys were extremely limited. Hoping to outpace Wycombe's defence, they relied solely on high balls down the middle and generally caused few problems to Delaney and Mead. The latter was particularly impressive.

Oxford's confidence, however, was growing visibly as the match progressed. Woodley inspired his colleagues with some superb interceptions, his anticipation snuffing out many Wycombe passes.

Dave Bullock replaced Harris with 15 minutes left. Harris had a disappointing time up against Woodley but his replacement found things just as tough in the firing line.

Soon after the substitution, Oxford had a golden chance to pull off a shock and somewhat undeserved victory. Wycombe's defence were slow to clear a dangerous situation on the edge of the box and the ball was pushed out to Dallaway, completely unmarked and 15 yards from goal. But faced only by Maskell, he shot weakly and the goalkeeper gathered the effort safely.

The crowd really got behind their team in the last 10 minutes, hoping for a late winner. Once or twice openings were created but in the main, Oxford dealt coolly with Wanderers' tired attacks.

WYCOMBE: J. Maskell; P. Birdseye, K. Mead, J. Delaney, R. Eaton; H. Kennedy, T. Reardon, M. Holifield; A. Horseman, D. Harris (sub D. Bullock 75 mins), D. Evans.

OXFORD: P. Harris; B. Cooper, B. Barr, J. Woodley, A. Glass; G. Atherton, E. Metcalfe, M. Prestcott; P. Dallaway, R. Green, M. Gilligan. Sub D. Green (not used).

Referee: D. Patton (Yately).

Official paying attendance: 1,200.
Approx total attendance: 1,550.

Wycombe Wanderers 0, Oxford City 0 Report by STUART EARP

goods although manager Brian Lee must be worried about the third place. Neither Dave Alexander nor Howard Kennedy have found last year's consistency yet.

As always, Wanderers had their chances to take the three points. But a combination of poor finishing, fine goalkeeping and ill fortune robbed them of goals. A change from the usual front three didn't help the cohesion, Dylan Evans replacing the injured Geoff Anthony, who was particularly impressive last Saturday.

ON THE CARDS

From the sixth minute, it was on the cards that Wycombe were going to have 'one of those nights' Horseman had a shot blocked after Delaney headed on Kennedy's long throw and then Evans followed up with a header but watched John Woodley clear off the line. When Peter Harris pulled down Derek Harris' left foot drive, things looked ominous.

better defensive performance by an Oxford player for many years.

Another of Oxford's stars was goalkeeper Harris. One of his best saves came in the 15th minute when Ray Eaton curled a free kick onto Horseman's head at the near post. The ball soared towards the top of the net before the 'keeper tipped it over for a corner.

An even better stop came in the 33rd minute. Reardon, who had another excellent 90 minutes, lofted the ball over the top of City's defence following a half cleared corner. Mead ran through inside and hit the ball as it came down on the volley. But Harris pulled out a brilliant reaction save when most of the crowd were shouting 'goal'.

Wycombe's inability to find the net brought a frustrating end to the half but they rediscovered their fire soon into the new half when Mick Holifield should have opened the account. Evans slipped Woodley on the wing and turned the ball inside to